What is Claimed:

1.   A method of tracking operations in an automated business process, the method comprising:

defining a plurality of operations at a plurality of nodes in a business process;

executing a workflow comprising the operations;

applying a plurality of business rules to the workflow at the nodes to affect the operations;

optionally changing the business rules and applying the changed business rules during execution of the workflow; and

providing a correlation between the business rules applied to the nodes and the corresponding affected operations to track operations within the workflow.

2.   The method of claim 1, wherein executing a workflow comprises executing a pre-defined progression of operations, wherein the operations are at least one of transactions internal to a business enterprise and transactions external to a business enterprise.

3.   The method of claim 1, wherein the operations comprise passing XML formatted messages according to the workflow.

4.   The method of claim 1, wherein applying a plurality of business rules to the workflow comprises using a rules engine integrated with a workflow processor.

5.   The method of claim 1, wherein optionally changing the business rules and applying the changed business rules during execution of the workflow comprises implementing a changed business rule while avoiding at least one of suspending, recompiling and redeploying the workflow.

6.   The method of claim 1, wherein optionally changing the business rules and applying the changed business rules during execution of the workflow comprises utilizing at least one declarative if/then statement.

7.   The method of claim 1, wherein providing a correlation between the business rules applied to the nodes and corresponding affected operations comprises providing a correspondence between a specific business rule executed at a node and a resultant state of an operation within the workflow of the automated business process.

8.   A computer system comprising;

a first processor function for executing instructions corresponding to a business workflow;

a second processor function for executing instructions corresponding to a plurality of business rules;

a first input device for receiving a document for routing according to the business workflow;

a second input device for accepting a change made to at least one of the business rules; and

an output device for transmitting the document according to the business workflow;

wherein upon an input from the first input device, the document is processed according to the business workflow using the business rules, and upon an input from the second input device, a workflow process affecting the document is changed in accordance with the change made to the at least one of the business rules, and wherein the workflow process is uninterrupted as a result of applying the change made to the at least one of the business rules.

9.   The computer system of claim 8, wherein the first processor function and the second processor function comprise the same processing unit.

10.   The computer system of claim 9, wherein the first processor function and the second processor function share information such that each individual business rule applied to a workflow step may be at least one of tracked, logged, inspected and correlated.

11.   The computer system of claim 8, wherein the first input device comprises an interface to a computer network.

12.   The computer system of claim 8, wherein the second input device comprises a computer terminal.

13.   The computer system of claim 8, wherein the output device comprises an interface to a computer network.

14.   The computer system of claim 8, further comprising a query engine wherein a query is constructed to evaluate at least one of the business rules.

15.   The computer system of claim 14, wherein construction of the query is delayed in the workflow process such that the query is executed over a data set smaller than a full sized data set whereby a time-efficient query results.

16.   A machine-readable medium, comprising instructions which execute a method of tracking of operations in an automated business process, the method comprising:

        defining a plurality of operations at a plurality of nodes in a business process;

        executing a workflow comprising the operations;

        applying a plurality of business rules to the workflow at the nodes to affect the operations;

        optionally changing the business rules and applying the changed business rules during execution of the workflow; and

        providing a correlation between the business rules applied to the nodes and the corresponding affected operations to provide tracking of operations within the workflow.

17.   The machine-readable medium of claim 16, wherein the operations comprise passing XML formatted messages according to the workflow.

18.   The machine-readable medium of claim 16, wherein applying plurality of business rules to the workflow comprises using a rules engine integrated with a workflow processor.

19.   The machine readable medium of claim 16, wherein optionally changing the plurality of business rules and applying the changed business rules during execution of the workflow comprises implementing a changed business rule while avoiding at least one of suspending, recompiling and redeploying the workflow.

20.   The machine-readable medium of claim 16, wherein providing a correlation between the business rules applied to the nodes and corresponding affected operations comprises providing a correspondence between a specific business rule executed at a node and a resultant state of an operation within the workflow of the automated business process.

21.   A method of business process automation, the method comprising:

executing a business process workflow in a machine comprising a workflow processor and a rules engine, wherein the business process workflow derives decision criteria from at least one rule, and wherein the workflow processor and rules engine comprise the same machine;

utilizing rule changes while simultaneously continuing execution of the workflow, wherein the changes comprise declarative if/then statements; and

optionally utilizing at least one database query to acquire information relevant to the workflow process and the at least one rule.

22.   The method of claim 21, further comprising providing a correlation between the at least one rule and a corresponding operation of the workflow process wherein the state of the operation is defined by an application of the at least one rule.

23.   The method of claim 21, wherein the at least one database query is delayed in the business process workflow such that the query is executed over a data set smaller than a full sized data set in the database whereby a time-efficient query results.